



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

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Chairman

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MICHAEL D. VARNEY
JOSEPH E. WEHR

BUDGET HEARINGS THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2008

Members Present: Robert Clements-Chairman, Richard Cleary, Mark Joyse, Barry Pinto, Michael Varney, Joseph Wehr

Others Present: N. DiCorleto-Fin Officer, S. Cullinan-Supt of Schools, D. Roberson-Chmn BOE, A. Littizzio-Dir Bus Svs BOE, P. Potamiaos and M. Contakis-Budget Advisory, Board of Education members and School Officials.

Chairman Robert Clements opened the hearing at 7:30 pm.

Opening Statement – Chairman Clements thanked Superintendent Cullinan and the Board of Education members and school officials for the time they have put in compiling and working on this budget. He appreciates it.

Citizens Forum – none

Board of Education Budget

Dale Roberson presented an overview of the 08-09 Budget. He stated that public education is a debt owed from one generation to the next. This budget is an increase of 6.86% or \$1,834,435 from the approved 07-08 budget. The increases consist of \$1,295,992 in negotiated increases in salaries and benefits, \$135,567 in diesel fuel, \$84,212 for heating fuel, \$81,600 other professional/technical expenses, \$40,262 for new text books, \$38,392 utilities, \$28,113 in program improvements, \$23,119 Social Security, \$20,367 Athletic Programs and \$86,761 for other budget items. He stated that this is a conservative budget and asked that the Board of Finance pass this on without any large cuts.

Superintendent Cullinan then explained that there are three budget themes. The first is to maintain the excellent education programs. He stated that, of course, Education comes first before any other items. The second theme is to address enrollment increases. The current enrollment as of October 1, 2007 was 2,597. The projected for 2008-09 is 2,620. The increases to the budget driven by enrollment also have to take into account the nature of the students, i.e.; costs associated with any disabilities which require additional

expense and personnel. The third budget theme is to phase out the pay for play and phase in the 7 unfunded athletic groups over a three year period. The first year costs would be \$52,171.

Some highlights: Principal Milbury at Windermere School is retiring and the need is to hire two new principals to replace him; one for the K-4 and one for the 5-6 grades. There are two sets of administration in this school except principals. The State is now requiring in school suspension and a paraprofessional needs to be hired to fill this. There is one additional bus in this budget. There is a five year replacement plan for textbooks in this budget. Some areas of concern for the Board of Education is class size for grade 6, and Kindergarten at Center School. 2008-09 Kindergarten at Center will be 08-09 and will require a third section. Energy costs continue to increase, the tuition account is an unknown, and student athletics and activities need to be phased in.

Questions and Answers:

Mr. Cleary asked why the salaries for new principals are higher than the retirees and why there are administrative positions in the budget for Windermere rather than a grade 6 teacher. Mr. Cullinan explained that he had put in extra in the new salaries in case it is needed to attract highly experienced and qualified candidates, and that Windermere School's immediate need is to take care of the school administration with Mr. Milbury's retirement.

Mr. Varney asked about the Dean of Students for the High School. Mr. Cullinan explained that the school was cited for this by NEASC as a need to attend to the school administrative needs. He is anticipating taking an existing teacher and moving him or her into this position.

Mr. Joyse asked whether the dual fuel burners in the capital improvements budget were factored into this budget. He was told no. He also asked why the cost to install these burners was so high. Mr. Littizzio told him that the cost for the Windermere School includes new boilers. They were told that the boilers should be replaced before dual burners are considered. The Middle School has seven separate burners and the cost to get the gas to the building is included.

Mr. Joyse asked about the grant that the school received for computers. He was told that it paid for 50 student laptops and 3 teachers' laptops, a router and connections and subscriptions for the student to use for English essay writing. The grant was for \$65,000 and the equipment will belong to the town after the grant period ends. It has increased the students' writing. Mr. Joyse also asked about the lease for the 330 computers that

were purchased last year. Mr. Cullinan told him they would be replacing older computers and be put on an 8 year life cycle rotation.

Mr. Wehr asked about the teacher's contract. Mr. Cullinan told him they were in the second year of a 3 year contract. 2008/09 would be year 1 for the administrative contract. Mr. Roberson stated that CABA has very active lobbyists for binding arbitration changes.

Mr. Cleary commented that the Parks and Recreation Dept should involve the schools in their 5 year plan.

Mr. Pinto asked about the diesel fuel. He was told that the town purchases through the Board of Education because they are the largest consumer with the buses and fuel oil. The Board of Education has 11 vans and uses about 14,000 gallons of unleaded gas per year. They purchase this from the Public Works tank.

Mr. Varney asked if the pay for parking fees would be eliminate and was told that this budget eliminated it. He also asked what the Board of Education would cut from this budget if needed. Some items Mr. Cullinan suggested was the math support person, clerical time increases, software, equipment, some textbooks, some projects, pay to park, athletic funding and new programs that are in this budget.

Mr. Clements asked what percentages of seniors go on to college? He was told that 90% go on to 2 year programs. He also stated that the Town of Ellington is very fortunate to have the special education director that it has. He asked Mr. Brettschneider what the current situation with special education is at this time. He was told that it is growing. Out of district placements are growing and the numbers of court and DCF placements are also growing.

Mr. Clements thanked the Board of Education for their presentation and closed the hearing at 9:35 pm.

Submitted by 
Lori Smith, Clerk